

Sphaerophysa Salsula, new to North America

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While driving along the highway in southern Colorado the past August 27, near the town of Monte Vista, a bushy growth bearing racemes of orange flowers drew the writer's attention. Upon examination, it was seen that the plant was a legume with inflated papery pods. Now, as orange-flowered legumes are exceedingly rare in the North American flora, manuals were at once searched for the plant's identity. There seemed to be nothing even related to it recorded, so specimens were made and seed collected for future examination.

Recently, in looking over the specimens and making a more complete check, the plant still could not be matched with anything known in North America. In thinking over the various leguminous genera with orange flowers, *Colutea* came to mind—there might be an herbaceous species of that woody Asiatic genus. Again a blank was drawn, so Bentham & Hooker's *Genera Plantarum* was consulted, and it was plainly indicated that the plant belonged in the sub-tribe *Coluteae*. It being highly improbable that an Antipodean plant could have established itself in temperate North America, the Asiatic genera were examined, and the plant was soon identified beyond doubt as *Sphaerophysa Salsula* (Pall.) DC., native of northern and central Asia, the genus merged by some botanists with *Swainsona*, a strictly Australian genus. In either case, the discovery of this plant adds a new genus and species to the North American flora, but its source in that locality is a matter of conjecture. In that section, the highway and railroad run parallel for some miles, separated by a 100-foot strip of ground filled with grass and weeds, a logical situation for an introduced plant. *Sphaerophysa* grows in that strip of ground, in at least a half dozen colonies scattered over as many miles, and always within ten feet of the highway.

The plant is about three feet tall, gregarious, in general appearance much like an erect *Astragalus*, the stems arising from underground, woody rootstocks. The leaves are alternate, 5–7 cm. long, with 9–19 elliptic to obovate leaflets 5–10 mm. long, the pairs subopposite. The entire plant is closely strigose-puberulent except for the upper surface of the leaflets and the

corolla. The flowers are 12–15 mm. long, and are borne in erect, axillary, pedunculate racemes 6–15 cm. long, the peduncles about the length of the subtending leaves. The pedicels are 5–8 mm. long. The calyx is campanulate, 3–4 mm. long, the teeth about 1 mm. long, acute, the two upper separated from the three lower by a broad, shallow sinus. The corolla is red-orange, the upraised standard with a bilobed yellow spot at the base of the blade, the keel yellow except for the apical third. The stamens are diadelphous, the ovary stipitate, densely fine-pubescent, the style barbate on the upper side, the stigma capitate. The fruits are bladderly-inflated, one-celled, paper legumes, rounded at the tip, finely pubescent and borne on deflexed pedicels, the protruding stipes again reflexed, bringing the pod to a horizontal position. The seeds are small and numerous, black, orbicular-reniform.

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Since writing the above, the writer has identified for the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, a specimen of *Sphaerophysa Salsula* collected near Fruitland, Utah, by Margaret T. Doult on August 14, 1936.

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